

Washington, DC - In an effort to make the United States much more secure, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped pass a sweeping measure in the House to implement currently unfulfilled recommendations of the bipartisan 9/11 Commission. The measure, which passed the House by a margin of 299-128, focuses on improving homeland security, preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and developing strategies for preventing the spread of radical Islam that promotes terrorism.

"Government's first priority must be to ensure that our country is safe. We can talk about education, health care, and the economy all we want, but unless we take the much needed steps to make our country much more secure and prevent future terrorists attacks none of those things will ultimately matter," Hinchey said. "The need to implement these recommendations from the 9/11 Commission has been glaring. Last year, the bipartisan group of 9/11 Commissioners gave the then Republican-controlled Congress and the Bush administration 5 F's, 12 D's, and 2 Incompletes in its 'report card' on steps taken to make America safe. Such poor marks were a call to action and today with a Democratic Congress we took that action."

In support of the Democratic measure on the 9/11 Commission recommendations, 9/11 Commission Vice Chair Lee Hamilton stated yesterday that, "The bottom line is that if this bill, H.R. 1, is enacted, funded and implemented, then the American people will be safer. ... The bill carries out the recommendations that [the Commission] has made."

Hinchey added, "In addition to preventing the current and near-term threat of terrorism, this measure also takes the responsible step of addressing the long-term causes of terrorism and seeks to eliminate them. By promoting a well-rounded education for children throughout the Middle East and helping countries in that region develop real economies that are based on things other than oil, we are helping to provide a future filled with hope and opportunity to individuals who otherwise might turn to despair, hate, and terrorism."

The bill includes a number of long-overdue steps to substantially improve homeland security, including :

- Allocating state homeland security grants based on risk, which will greatly help New York protect itself against acts of terrorism.
- Creating a stand-alone grant program to provide first responders with the type of equipment that allows them to communicate with one another during emergencies;

- Phasing in a requirement of 100 percent inspection of the cargo carried on passenger aircraft over the next three years (most of this cargo is currently not inspected);
- Quickly accelerating the installation of explosive detection systems for checked baggage at the nation's airports;
- Improving explosive detection systems at passenger checkpoints at the nation's airports; and
- Phasing in a requirement of 100 percent scanning of U.S.-bound shipping containers over the next five years.
- The bill also includes provisions to better prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass
 - destruction, such as:
 - Strengthening the Cooperative Threat Reduction ("Nunn-Lugar") program that focuses on securing loose nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union;
 - Providing increased tools for the Proliferation Security Initiative, through which the U.S. and participating countries interdict WMD; and
 - Establishing a U.S. Coordinator for the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism at the White House, who would serve as a presidential advisor on proliferation issues.
- Finally, the bill also includes provisions to reduce the appeal of extremism, including:
 - Providing for the establishment of a Middle East Foundation, to promote economic opportunities, education reform, human rights and democratic processes in the countries of the Middle East; and
 - Promoting quality educational opportunities for youth in Arab and other predominantly Muslim countries, including expanding U.S. scholarship and exchange programs.